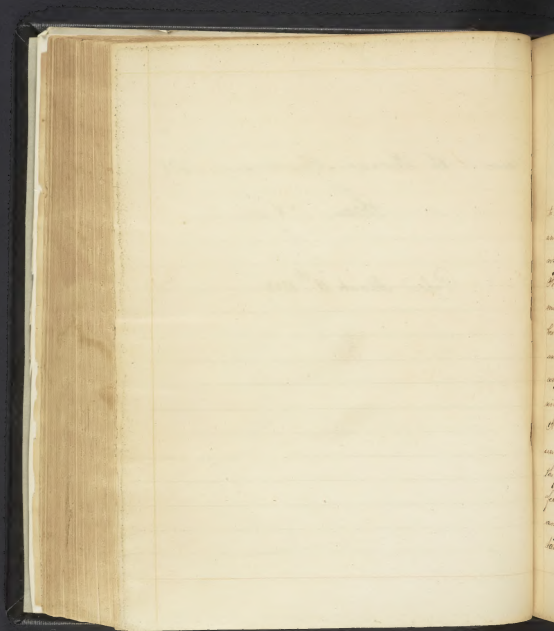


Given at the African Slave House in 1821

Samuel Guinness

Passed March 11th 1823



Fevers at the Philadelphia Almshouse in 1821.

This was a bilious fever, of an aggrivated character, which appears to have been confined to a particular class of inhabitants in this city and Liberties, viz the most indigent and miserable of the negroes; from which circumstance it derived the popular name of the "black fever". For several successive years it has prevailed among them with great mortality; during the last season I recollect having seen a great number of cases of this description, while attending the practice of the House, and very many fell victims to it. I shall attempt to give a sketch of this complaint as it presented itself to my own immediate view this season, with the comparative effect of the different remedies employed for the cure. It was about the latter end of May that the first patients laboring under this disease were admitted into the Philadelphia Almshouse, the few first cases having the well marked characters of ordinary bilious fever, excited no suspicion, and were in fact easily treated by the common depletion means. As the weather became warmer, the number of patients considerably increased, accompanied with a corresponding degree

of malignancy, until the beginning of July, when it suffered a check, seemingly in consequence of the weather becoming suddenly very cool. During this period however, a great many patients were received into this Institution. The disease as has already been stated, prevails principally among the lowest class of the blacks; and its prevalence among them has been attributed (and no doubt with much propriety) to indolent and intemperate habits of life, to which they are naturally disposed; to which may be added a dirty and unwholesome diet, and a total disregard to cleanliness, both personal and in their habitations.

Another vice to which they are addicted, is drunkenness; they take but little substantial food, drink to excess, and during a state of intoxication not unfrequently expose themselves to the scorching rays of the sun by day, and at night to the noxious vapours at this time descending, by lying before the doors of their miserable habitations.

They are often crowded together in the narrow and dirty alleys of the Liberties, particularly in confined places, where not unfrequently two or three families of these unhappy beings exist in a space so small as would scarcely make as many individuals comfortable. These and many other vices and irregularities are fruitful sources of so much sickness and death, when they prevail in so high a degree. The disease once

existed, suddenly prostrated the powers of life to such a degree, as to defy all our efforts to subdue it unless timely attended to, this melancholy fact was but too frequently exemplified during its prevalence.

Another cause of its mortality was want of medical attention in proper time, and other accommodations to render their situation comfortable. In consequence of extreme poverty they seldom solicited medical aid, and often their situation was not made known to the Guardians of the Poor, until they were beyond all hopes of recovery. Such being the fact, they were not unfrequently brought here in so low a state, that many died a few hours after admission, and several, to the no small degree of despoise of the drogmén, were found dead in the carts on their arrival here.

I shall now endeavour to describe the symptoms and progress of the disease, as well as circumstances will admit. It was almost impossible to gain any satisfactory information from the patients themselves, in consequence of the disturbed state of their minds. From such, however, as could describe ^{their} feelings about the time of the attack, it appeared, that a few days, sometimes but a few hours preceding that event, the patients felt a general lassitude or weariness and drowsiness, with alternate sensations of heat

the first of the month of June 1818
I received from you a letter of the 25th
in which you inform me that you have
received from the Secretary of the
Board of Commissioners of the
Land Office a copy of the
report of the Surveyor General
of the Land Office for the year
1817. I have the honor to
acknowledge the receipt of the
report and to inform you that
it has been forwarded to the
proper authorities for their
consideration. I am, Sir,
very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. M. Smith

and cold. Sometimes the attack was more sudden, and was announced by a smart chill, followed by intense heat of the body, extreme thirst, violent pain in the head, back and loins, hurried respiration, nausea and vomiting. Such was the nature of the attack. In a short time the Epigastric region became very tender and painful, which gradually increased and extended over the whole abdomen, and in some instances was so exquisite as to cause the patient to cry out, on the slightest pressure being applied to the part.

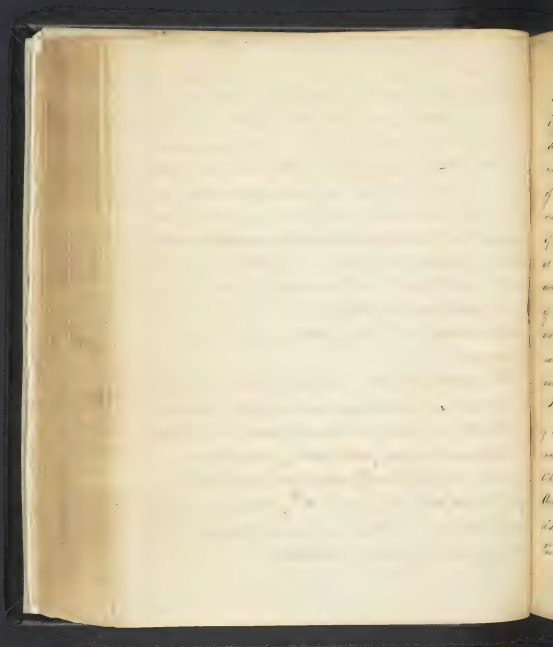
The pulse was commonly small, quick and frequent, beating from 110 to 140 strokes per minute, and easily compressed; the tongue was covered with a yellowish fur; the eyes from a reddish appearance, gradually assumed a deep yellow colour; the skin was tinged with the same, as was very evident in the malar bones; the bowels were very costive; the urine high coloured and scanty.

The above symptoms increased very rapidly, with slight remissions, and would in a little time destroy the patient unless arrested by medical interference.

The vomiting was often distressing, and the gastric irritation so considerable, that even the mildest substances taken into the stomach were immediately ejected. Although there was

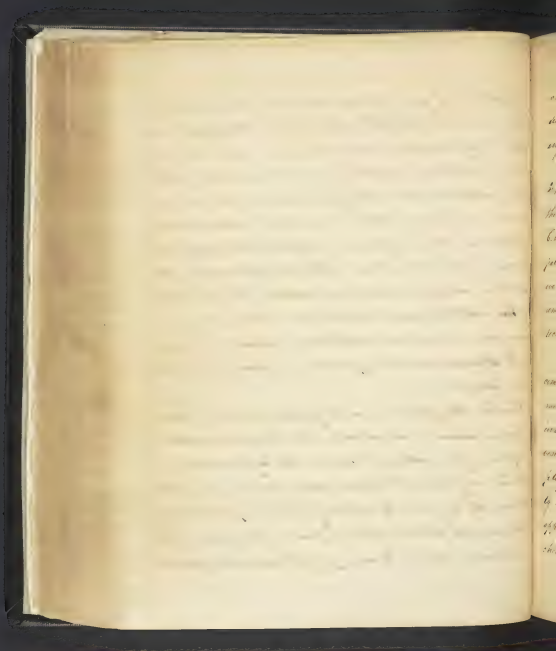
after considerable disengagement of the intellectual faculties, there was seldom much delirium; more frequently the patients were in a comatose state, and when roused up would often describe their feelings with striking justness. If the disease was not checked in its course, the fatal symptoms quickly appeared, such as laborious respiration, hoarseness and oppression of the chest, cold clammy sweats, cold extremities total insensibility to all external impressions, accompanied with a little and tremulous pulse. At the close the tongue was often very hard, dry and retracted, and almost black; the mouth and jaws were parched and very red; a large collection of serum in the lungs and glands.

The muscular strength in the advanced stage was in some cases astonishing. The patients would rise out of bed and go to the door which was panted a few hours before death. On two instances I witnessed with surprise patients almost fully life, get out of bed, walk over to the floor they returned again to their beds and expired in the act of lying down. This extraordinary degree of muscular strength was always an unfavorable symptom, and invariably foreshadowed a protracted dissolution.



And by my friend Doctor Lawrence I examined the major-
ity of those that died. He uniformly found the stomach in a
state of inflammation, varying however in degree. In a few
cases it contained a quantity of dark relaxed stringy fluid
of a peculiar and somewhat offensive smell; this was con-
sidered as effusion of blood mixed with the natural secretion
of this organ, by an experienced practitioner who was present
at one of the examinations. Other the inflammation exten-
ded to the duodenum; and in one instance the whole length
of the intestine small was visible in places being of a
dark red color and covered with distinct blood vessels, having
in the stomach, a similar appearance of effused blood in their
interstices.

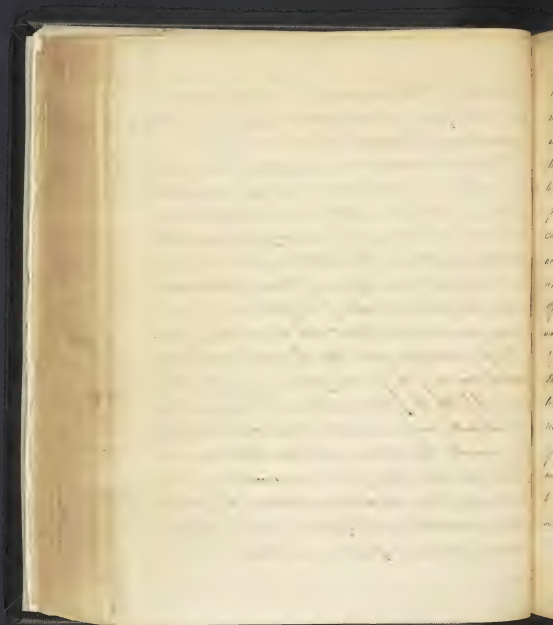
The Liver, though enlarged in its position, presented no trace
of organic disease in its structure, that the eye could detect,
except in a few instances it seemed rather soft, its ducts were
obscurely enlarged, & in this case were in a sound state.
Occasionally we found the surface of the liver preternaturally
distended with blood, and the substance containing more fluid
than is usual, otherwise it seemed perfectly natural in appearance.



and structure. The stomach appears to have been the primary seat of the complaint, and to it most of the paroxysms and distressing sensations of the patients themselves were referred.

I shall now mention the remedies employed in its cure. From what has already been said, it must appear evident, that the stage in which general depletion would have been most beneficial, had in the majority of cases elapsed previous to the patients being admitted into this Institution; this being the case, we were in a great measure deprived of the use of this antiseptic remedy; but whenever the state of the patient would admit, recourse was had to the lancet with the most happy effect.

The first indication, was to allay the gastric irritation, which commonly was one of the first symptoms, and frequently continued more or less till the patients came here; for this purpose the various anti-acidic remedies such as the Neutral Mucilage, the effervescing draught, lime water and milk, Soda Water &c were employed; sometimes either of these would succeed, more commonly all would fail; under such circumstances a large blister applied immediately over the Epigastrium was invariably checked it, provided it produced vesication.



When considerable pain existed in the part, leech bleeding was dis-
solved previous to its application. Having composed the stom-
ach, the alimentary canal next claimed attention; to unload
their contents, eight or ten grains of calomel were first given
to the patient and followed up by small doses of some other
purgative, as an infusion of senna; solution of liquor cathart.
Castor oil &c as one or the other proved best according to the stom-
ach; until three or four copious evacuations should be procured
which were generally of a black colour and very offensive.
If the last purgatives were all rejected, calomel in smaller do-
ses was repeated alone until the bowels were sufficiently moved.
If the pain in the knee was not relieved after the operation of
the cathartic, blood was freely drawn from the trachea and
temples with the cups and blood-letting which brought some
relief; if not a blister applied between the shoulders was
given. In a patient in allaying the pain and swelling, leeches
were also applied to the abdomen, with much benefit
to the system, the bowels were kept in a soluble state through-
out the course of the disease with some suitable medicine.

In the remission I have mentioned, rather to produce a mitigation



of the disease. Should we apply to the system, and direct-
ing has recourse to which appears like a stone in passing the
from process it was genuine. Should all our means be ex-
hausted, the system could still repeat and complete
some of great fermentation were we, when it became necessary to
depleted the system. For this purpose the contents of some
new, with a liberal quantity of new, which with great ex-
cellent effects, together with small doses of a decoction of sassa-
parilla, frequently repeated, were found most efficacious.

Should the system be exhausted, and the system be exhausted, the
system is to the system of the system, as a direction of the system
in the system of the system, which created a heat and glow in the
system. As a stimulant, this was the main part of the efforts
in the system to the system, but with no recent advantage.

The directly proceeding in the system, the system of treatment, adapting
our treatment to the particular circumstances of the case, it was greatly
concerned to see a patient recover under circumstances
so most unfavorable. During the convalescent state, which
was the state and protracted, with disposition to relapse,
the system was continued, and given, variously combined, with

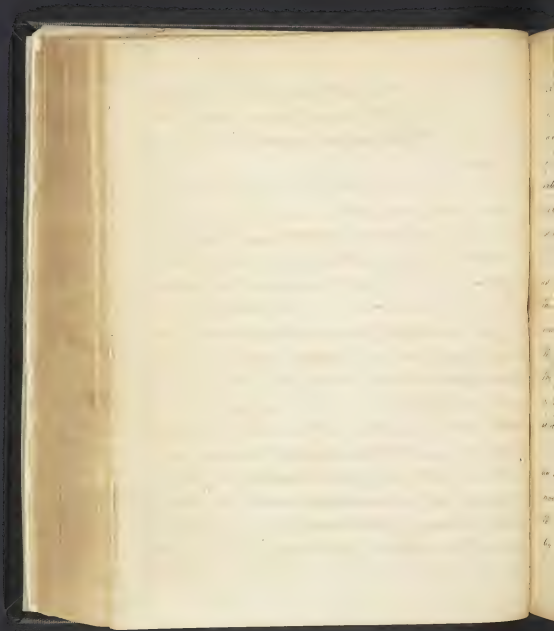
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in addition of animals, together with a liberal quantity of
wheat which the patients generally preferred to every other
kind of food. The diet also was adapted to the condition of
the patient.

"We use the method of treatment" formerly, when the liver
first made its appearance; but now we do much more extensively
but, many times, better, combine it with leeches. To apply a
new therapeutic remedy, presents itself. As the liver has
a great deal to do in our life, it is a little to be neglected
to our own advantage. & now is available, should it ever
be, as yet in a class the progress of the complaint. The patient
also had a severe case. It is calling, mostly in the instance
of persons who are in the habit of giving it a fair trial,
as our own to that he had been very discouraging.

After the results have been carefully examined, and the various applications made to the two, sometimes, it becomes necessary to submit to the view of another dissection, so often as I desire. In this, perhaps two or three grains of calomel were divided, very second fourth or sixth hour according to the course of the symptoms. If the mercurial action could be



exists, it always needs the disease. There can be no
a more, if you were a patient. If the ship were the
vessel, you would not be able to be, unless the vessel itself
is the vessel to the ship, and the vessel appears to be
entirely destroyed in some cases, particularly in the case of
certainly, it is not in the case of a vessel, and it is not
destroyed.

"I have a note which was early in the week of this delivered, & as
 as we were limited experience has been of service under in
 the "Providence" & a note on the same in being, it
 would, it may be, be of some service to the
 the memorial under consideration, it is inevitable - because
 the "Providence" is the complaint, and ultimately, present one
 a copy. It also contains the letter against the religious
 union to be used as a copy to examine.

It has appeared to me, as a remedy in this disease as it is, is better suited to our nature, but under all circumstances would not consider it a certain remedy for the cure. As the nature, in the complaint now treated in its first stage by bleeding, is not assisted by such medicines as determine



to the skin, I was fully persuaded they would be attended with a favourable result; this is confirmed by the testimony of several Practitioners, who informed me that the antiphlogistic blood succeeded with them in the first stage of the disease.

In the treatment of fevers generally, the blood-letting in the heat of our diseases, and should always be kept in view. Experience has proven it one of the most certain and efficacious means to be used, and when judiciously managed, equally safer. but it is in the commencement only, that it can be carried to a sufficient extent to be of essential and permanent benefit in a disease like the present, whose attack was sudden and severe, whose course was very rapid, and in a short time proven fatal.

This important period having elapsed, our means of cure become more limited and uncertain; it was here morous discharges its powers and was in fact the only medicine in which any degree of assistance could be placed.

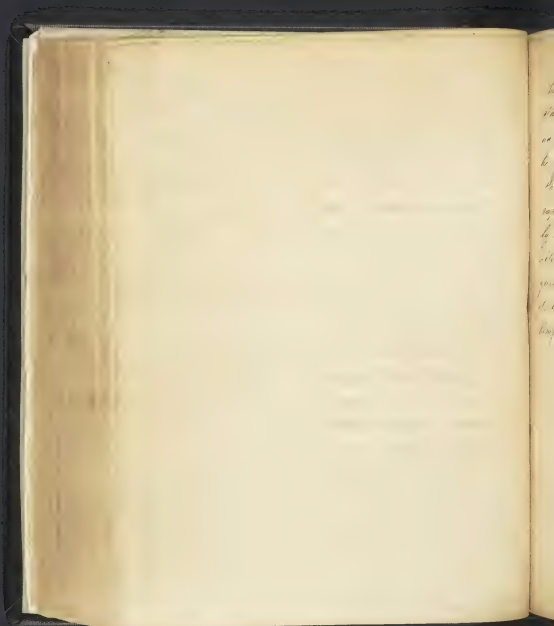
In the foregoing short and cursory account of the fatal disease, I have ascribed much duty to the narrowness of fields



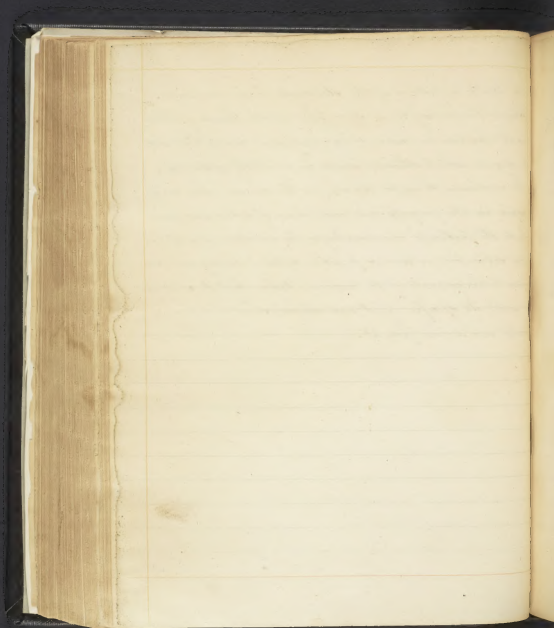
as they occurred at the bed side. I might easily have ex-
tended this paper to a much greater length by the insertion
of cases, and the detail of symptoms occasionally obser-
ved; but since I trust has been said to point out
the nature of the complaint. One of the chief objects in writ-
ing the above has been to tribute to the superior effi-
cacy of Mercury in the treatment of this venereal, at the
first stage, and to prove.

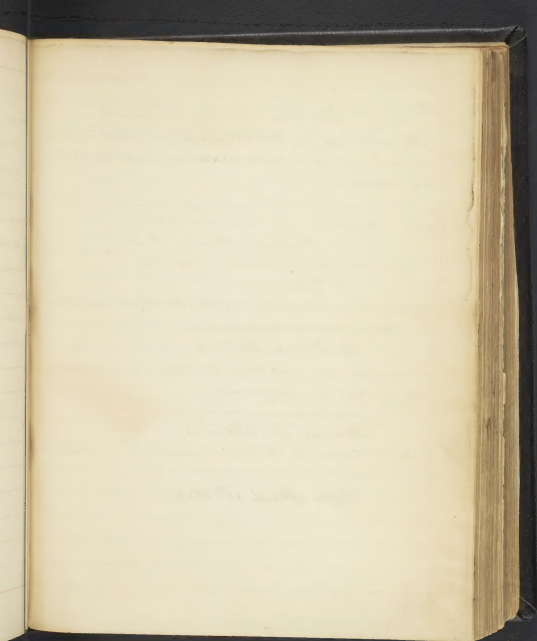
The practice is not novel. I was informed by a gentleman
now in charge of this arm, named the preceding summer
(which time the puer was very febrile and laborious) and
I was induced to the fact that salivation was the only re-
medy to the patient, while every other means proved completely
ineffectual. But in the employment of this remedy a
great mistake was committed; it was given in too small
a quantity; the patient made it his duty to keep the mercury
long time to exert its peculiar action, & the circulation
it was soon effluvia, which induced me to prescribe the med-
icine broke as already stated.

I will not remain, or allow physicians to determine on



the truth or fallacy of the statements herein mentioned.
Should the remedy be as successful in the hands of others
as it has been in mine, I am confident many lives will
be saved, which otherwise would be infallibly destroyed.
In conclusion I would observe, as the disease was very
rapid in its progress, and every hour of delay was greatly
to the patients disadvantage, the intention was to ex-
cite salivation as soon as possible, without having any re-
gard to the quantity of the medicine taken, but to continue
it, until its specific effect was vinced, short of which, no
benefit was derived from it.





Thalamen Medicum Inaugurale

*De morbis, qui per Franklinianam comitatum publicam
graspati sunt, Anno MDCCCXXII. Martii et Aprilis
his mensibus.*

quod

sub moderamine viri admodum reverendi

Fredrick Brasley L. L.

Universitatis Pennsylvaniae Praefecti,

Ac. Am.

*ex curatorum auctoritate illustris, et amplissima
facultatis medica decretis,*

Pro Gradui Doctoris

*summiq; in Medicina honoribus et privilegiis
iura et legitima consequendis;*

auditorum examini subiecit

Andreas F. McDowell

De Thalamipoli Pennsylvaniae, —

Papst March 12th 1823